OFFICIAL

IN THE CLAIMS

Please replace claims 1, and 7 with claims 1 and 7 as rewritten below:

1. (twice amended) In an MPEG information distribution system, a method for forming a transport stream having a bitrate BR and including one or more programs, said method comprising the steps of:

defining N slots within said transport stream, where N is an integer greater than one, each of said N slots being associated with a respective plurality of non-contiguous transport packets, each of said respective non-contiguous transport packets being separated by N-1 transport packets;

including, within said transport stream being formed, up to N transport encoded programs, where each transport encoded program is associated with one of said N slots and has a bitrate of BR/N; and

in the case of less than N transport encoded programs being included within said transport stream being formed, including NULL transport packets within said transport stream being formed, said NULL packets forming NULL programs within said transport stream being formed.

7. (amended) An apparatus for generating N programs, where N is an integer greater than one, to produce a slotted transport stream respectively having N slots, comprising:

a transport clock source CLK;

N transport encoders for respectively receiving said N programs and producing N program streams;

a frequency divider coupled between the transport clock source and the respective N transport encoders to divide a timing signal CLK from said transport clock source into N timing signals; and

a multiplexer, coupled to an output of said N transport encoders, for sequentially multiplexing one transport packet from each respective transport

encoded program streams to form the slotted transport stream, wherein each transport packet from a single program stream is separated by N-1 transport packets.

Please cancel claim 11.

Add the following new claims 12-25.

--12. (newly added) Apparatus for generating a transport stream comprising a plurality of programs, each of said programs having associated with it a respective time slot, said apparatus comprising:

a frequency divider, for dividing a transport clock timing signal into a plurality of timing signals; and

a plurality of encoders, each of said encoders encoding a program stream in response to a respective timing signal to produce a respective encoded program stream, each of said encoded program streams being coupled to a switch via a respective buffer memory;

said switch selectively coupling program stream transport packets from said buffer memories to produce a slotted transport stream, wherein each transport packet of each program stream is separated by a transport packet from at least one other program stream.

13. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising:

a file server, for storing encoded program streams and selectively providing at least one encoded program stream to said switch;

said switch inserting said at least one encoded program stream received from said file server into a corresponding time slot.

14. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said corresponding time slot comprises an unused time slot.

15. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said unused time slot included NULL transport packets.

16. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising:

a file server, for storing an encoded program stream and selectively providing said encoded program stream to said switch in response to a subscriber request for said encoded program stream;

said switch inserting said at least one encoded program stream received from said file server into a corresponding time slot.

17. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 16, wherein an identification of the time slot including said requested program stream provided to said requesting subscriber.

18. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein a bitrate of an encoded transport stream is adapted by adding NULL packets to the transport encoded transport stream.

19. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein a number of NULL packets to add is determined according to at least one of an insertion rate, a slot repetition period and a packet count.

20. (newly added) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein a bitrate of an encoded transport stream is adapted by deleting program packets from the transport encoded transport stream.

21. (newly added) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing, in a file server, at least one transport encoded programs; and